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AUTHOR Miller, Jon D.
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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a two-dimensional model of political specialization and discusses its implications for social science education. The first dimension, interest specialization, involves the choice of whether or not to devote time and resources to political affairs at all. The interest specialization process of young adults and adults was examined using data from a 1978 National Public Affairs Study and a recent national survey of adults designed by Miller and Prewitt (1979) respectively. Looking at both analyses, it appears that politics are salient to only half of the adult population and to slightly fewer young adults. The second dimension, issue specialization, involves the number of issues within the political system that any individual can follow knowledgeably at any point in time. Data from the two national surveys indicate that most citizens who are interested in politics follow only two or three political issues, and it is on this limited set of issues that individual political behavior decisions are formed and executed. The political specialization process (the combination of interest and issue specialization) of both young adults and adults has implications for political education, including the following. Citizenship should be presented to students not as a duty and a responsibility but as an opportunity involving both costs and rewards. Citizenship should be discussed and taught in less moral terms. New courses modelled after those that are successful at the college level should be offered in high schools. (RM)

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Political Specialization and Social Science Education

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Jon D. Miller

Northern Illinois University

A paper presented to the 1982 Meeting of the
Social Science Education Consortium,
East Lansing, Michigan

June 5, 1982

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a two-dimensional model of political specialization and discusses its implications for social science education. The first dimension involves the choice of whether or not to devote time and resources to political affairs at all and this dimension is referred to as interest specialization. Given the alternative time demands facing most citizens in modern urbanized living situations, this is not an easy choice and it appears that only a minority of the adult population in the United States presently places a high priority on keeping up with political affairs or influencing political events. The second dimension involves the selection of a limited number of issues and concerns and is referred to as issue specialization. The number of active issues within the political system at any point in time is far too large for any individual to follow knowledgeably, thus there is an inevitable specialization process. Most citizens who are interested in politics follow only two or three political issues, and it is on the basis of this limited set of political issues that individual political behavior decisions are formed and executed. The combination of interest and issue specialization is referred to as political specialization.

The political specialization process has important implications for social science education. Several specific changes in the present approach to social science education are recommended.

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INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, a substantial literature has focused on individual differences in the levels of interest in politics (Campbell et. al., 1960; Verba and Nie, 1972; Almond and Verba, 1963; Milbrath, 1965), the level of knowledge held about the political system (McClosky, 1964), and the lack of structure in the public's attitudes toward political issues (Converse, 1964; Dawson, 1973). These problems have been attacked from the perspective of voting studies, socialization, and attitude structure, but we still do not have models or theories of this set of behaviors that produce a high level of behavioral prediction and a reasonable explanation of the mechanisms at work.

The purpose of this paper is to outline a two-dimensional model of political specialization that I believe can improve our understanding of several of the most perplexing issues in political behavior and that may provide some guidance for social science education. The first dimension of the model is referred to as interest specialization and represents the necessity for each individual to allocate his or her time to a selected set of activities, since it is not feasible to engage in all of the activities available in modern urbanized societies. This is a process that has been recognized by sociologists and anthropologists for decades, but has been largely ignored by political scientists. The second dimension of the model is referred to as issue specialization and represents the need for each individual to select a relatively small number of political issues about which to become and remain informed. The range of active political issues at any point in

time is too large for any individual to follow knowledgeably thus it is imperative that some choices be made. When these two processes combine, a process of political specialization results that significantly defines the roles that various groups play in the political system.

While the main objective of this paper is to discuss the implications of the political specialization process on social science education, it is necessary to begin with a review of each of the two dimensions of the political specialization process and to examine the combination of the two dimensions in regard to both adult political behavior and young adult socialization to the political system. The next three sections, therefore, will focus on interest specialization, issue specialization, and political specialization in that order. The final section will seek to identify some of the major implications of these processes for social science education and the recommend some approaches that might prove helpful.

INTEREST SPECIALIZATION

One important decision faced by each citizen in a modern polarchy like the United States is whether or not to allocate time and resources to become and remain informed about political affairs and to participate in the political system. This is not an easy decision and it has been too often ignored by political scientists. Yet, for the individual, time is a zero-sum situation and a given hour or day can be allocated only once. In earlier decades when society was predominately rural and the pace of events was slower, it was possible for liter-

ate people to read almost all of the available news of political events, to discuss politics without the assistance of a color commentator, and to attend to a wide variety of matters. In the most ideal reconstruction of the good old days, a person had time for job, family, church, garden, and politics. In reality, of course, this historical vision applied primarily to the upper middle classes who were able to read and who had the income to sustain some level of leisure. The illiterate and those who worked 12 hours a day seven days a week most assuredly did not spend their leisure reading the evening paper and discussing political issues[1].

Without seeking to determine the exact levels of leisure available historically for personal and political use, it is recognized that modern society generates substantially greater and more diverse demands on the individual's time than would have been the case a century ago. Most people now live in urbanized settings and have the choice of a wide array of entertainment, of numerous clubs and organizations, of volumes of printed material on an extraordinary range of topics, of sporting events for both personal and electronic viewing, and opportunities for personal involvement and expression in a wide range of creative arts and handicrafts. Bronfenbrenner (1970) has noted the absence of the extended family and the transfer of child-rearing from parents to institutions and professionals away from the home. Keni-

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[1] For some occupations, this may not have been true. Samuel Gompers reports that one of the reasons for the emergence of labor leadership in the crafts was the ability of persons in jobs like cigar rollers to engage in political discussions while performing their work. And since some of the more skilled immigrants were also literate and moderately well read, there was indeed some opportunity for lower and working class political discourse.

ston (1977) has described the effect of these changes on family life and Toffler (1970) has popularized the stress producing character of the wide range of personal choices in modern life.

Facing this array of opportunities, the individual citizen must decide between using his time to engage in politics or undertake other very attractive personal enterpises. It is the general thesis of my argument that politics as an activity has not been a majority choice for some time and that the declining rates of participation in formal political events like elections are but one indicator of the tendency of citizens to attend to other matters. This is not to argue that most citizens are willing to renounce on a permanent basis their right to vote or to make their views known if they should be come concerned about an issue or problem, but for the year-in year-out cycles of political events, it appears that most citizens are simply not as attracted to political activities as they are to other activities.

Conceptualized in this manner, the general observation is verified in numerous data sets and in a wide array of social science literature. Milbrath (1965) observed that

> About one-third of the American adult population can be characterized as politically apathetic or passive; in most cases, they are unaware, literally, of the political part of the world around them. Another 60 per cent play largely spectator roles in the political process; they watch, they cheer, they vote, but they not not battle. (p. 21)

Campbell, et al.(1960), Converse (1964, 1970), and Verba and Nie (1972) have documented the low levels of interest in politics and the even lower levels of substantive political information held by a significant segment of the adult population.

I believe that the interest specialization process begins during the high school and college years. This is a critical period in which basic decisions are frequently made concerning career choices, marital plans, and life styles (Davis, 1964,1965; Astin, 1977). The decisions of young adulthood are not irrevocable, but they tend to set a pattern for many persons. Most of the political socialization research of the last three decades has focused on socialization to the political community and to regime rules, but has paid little attention to the alternatives to political interest and activity. To examine the roots of the interest specialization process, it is appropriate to turn to an analysis of the young adult cohort.

INTEREST SPECIALIZATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

If interest specialization does emerge during the high school and college years, it should be possible it should be possible to find empirical evidence of the process. The 1978 National Public Affairs

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[2] The 1978 NPAS was designed and conducted by Jon Miller, Robert Suchner, and Alan Voelker under a grant from the National Science Foundation (SED77-18491). Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations included in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the National Science Foundation or its staff.

The study utilized a self-administered questionnaire that included a wide range of items concerning media consumption, topical interests, and more detailed batteries of interest and attitude information concerning foreign policy, science and technology-related issues, economic policy, and civil rights issues. Information about the responsdents political party preferences, religious views, life goals, and social psychological attitudes were also collected. The instrument was 16 pages in length and required about 50 minutes for completion by the average respondent.

Data were collected from approximately 2900 high school students in 38 high schools in 20 states and from approximately 1200 college students on 30 college and university campuses. Both the high school and college samples were clustered probability samples, based on national listings of high schools and universities provided

Study[2] provides a good data base to examine the emergence of the salience of politics among young adults. A review of the socialization literature suggested that salience might be viewed as coming from either a personal interest in political events or from a tradition of partisanship and partisan activity. Separate measures of general political interest and partisanship were developed and these two indices were used to construct a single measure of the salience of politics.

A measure of political interest was derived from a set of 11 life goals that were presented to each respondent, ranging from "becoming accomplished in my career field" to "raising a family" to "keeping up to date with political affairs." A factor analysis identified three clear factors, which were labelled family interest, career interest, and political interest (see Table 1). Although five items loaded on the political interest factor, the first three items were significantly stronger and conceptually more unified, thus the Index of Political Interest reflected the number of political goals that a respondent declared to be "essential" or "very important," and ranged from zero to three.

The distribution of the young adults respondents on the Index indicated a relatively low level of political interest (see Table 2). Over 40 per cent of the respondents reported that none of the three political goals were important to them and another 30 per cent expressed interest in only one of the three goals.

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For a full technical desciption of the sample characteristics, data collection procedures, and questionnaire, see Chapter 4 in Miller, Suchner & Voelker's Citizenship in an Age of Science (1980).

TABLE 1

Factor Structure of Life Goals Among Young Adults

Variables	Factors 1	2	3	h^2
1. Authority in my field	.81	-.07	-.11	.66
2. Recognition from colleagues	.68	-.05	-.10	.48
3. Well off financially	.65	.25	.18	.48
4. Have administrative responsibility	.64	-.01	.15	.46
5. Accomplishment in career	.61	-.19	-.06	.45
6. Influence on political decision	.09	-.81	-.16	.71
7. Up to date with political affairs	.11	-.72	-.13	.57
8. Participate in community affairs	-.03	-.65	.27	.49
9. Influence social values	.06	-.60	.20	.43
10. Develop philosophy of life	-.05	-.43	-.03	.18
11. Raise a family	.03	-.05	.61	.38
Percent total variance	32.0	19.6	10.5	62.1
Percent common variance	57.6	31.5	10.9	

TABLE 2

Distribution of Young Adults on the Index of Political Interest

Index Score	Per Cent
0	32.6%
1	30.0
2	16.8
3	10.5

N = 4029

To measure partisanship, each respondent was asked to indicate a political party preference on an item with choices ranging from strong Democrat to strong Republican, and including both other and none choices. For our purposes, the direction of partisanship is not important, but rather its intensity. Respondents reporting none, other, or pure independence were classified as non-partisan. Respondents classifying themselves as independent Republicans or independent Democrats were classified as independent leaners. Similarly, straight party identifiers were classified as regular partisans and strong party identifiers were coded as strong partisans. The 1978 NPAS data indicated that approximately a third of the young adults were non-partisan (see Table 3). Traditional regular or strong partisans were a minority, representing only about 30 per cent of the newest political generation.

Returning to the original proposition that an individual might find politics to be salient through either a strong personal interest

TABLE 3

Distribution of Young Adults on the Index of Partisanship

Partisanship	Percent
Independent	34.1%
Independent Leaners	16.3
Regular Partisans	24.3
Strong Partisans	6.4

N = 3270

in political events or through a partisan commitment, the Index of Political Interest and the Index of Partisanship were cross-tabulated and examined (see Table 4). The two indices are nearly independent (Gamma=.07), but this does not diminish their utility for typology building. For the purpose of defining the salience of politics, all respondents with a score or two or more on the Index of Political Interest were scored high on salience, regardless of their level of partisanship. Recognizing that some individuals may not define politics to be a major life goal, but still may be actively involved through a partisan commitment, all respondents who classified themselves as strong partisans were also scored high on political salience.

While these decisions handle the two ends of the conceptual range, it is possible that a respondent might be moderate in both partisanship and political interest, but that the combination of the two factors would be sufficient to make politics salient to the individual. Accordingly, those young adults who had a score of at least one

TABLE 4

The Relationship of Political Interest and Partisanship

Intensity of Partisanship	Index of Political Interest 0	1	2	3
Not Reporte	16%	10	3	2
Independent	16	10	6	3
Independent Leaners	6	6	3	2
Regular Partisans	10	8	4	2
Strong Partisans	2	2	1	1

(cell entries are per cent of total respondents)

N = 4029

on the Index of Political Interest and who had classified themsleves as regular or strong partisans were coded high on political salience.

The resulting typology produced a dichotomous measure that classified approximately 39 per cent of the young adults as finding politics to be a salient topic. (see Table 5). While refinements of the measure might have the effect of moving the percentage distribution a few points one way or the other, it appears that only a minority of young adults found politics to be personally salient. This result is consistent with the interest specialization hypothesis. The data from the other life goals items indicates the competitive attention matrix within which political interest must develop -- if at all.

An examination of the demographic, socio-economic, and personality factors associated with the salience of politics may be helpful in exploring the interest specialization hypothesis. The data from the 1978 NPAS indicated that political salience was positively associated

TABLE 5

The Salience of Politics among Young Adults

	Per cent Salient	N
All Respondents	39%	4029
Gender		
Female	37	2064
Male	42	1963
Educational Expectations		
Less than baccalaureate	33	1235
Baccalaureate or more	44	2436
Career Interest		
Low	29	1866
High	48	2163
Political Efficacy		
Low	33	1789
High	45	2224
Self-Esteem		
Low	34	679
Moderate	39	1853
High	46	1320
Politicization		
None	31	1961
Peer Only	41	1099
Family	53	968

with the male gender, the expectation of a college degree, a high level of career interest, a high level of political efficacy, a high level of self-esteem, a high level of family politicization, and high parental socio-economic status. While most of these relationships would appear to be consistent with previous social-psychological por-

traits of the democratic personality (Sniderman, 1975), there are several significant associations among these measures and some contradictory relationships.

To clarify the structure of these relationships, a path model was constructed, utilizing the logit techniques of Goodman (1972a, 1972b) and Fienberg (1977). The analysis indicated that only three of the variables were directly related to the salience of politics -- a high level of career interest, a high level of family politicization, and a strong sense of political efficacy. The best predictor of the salience of politics was the level of career interest of the respondent, which accounted for approximately 26 per cent of the total mutual dependence[3] in the logit model predicting the salience of politics. In the context of the multivariate model, a direct relationship between the Index of Career Interest[4] and political salience means that young adults with a high score on the Index of Career Interest are more likely to find politics to be salient than are those persons with a lower level of career interest, holding constant all of the other direct and indirect influences on the salience of politics. There is little previous evidence in the socialization literature to tie an interest in politics to an interest in career success, and in a general sense, the relationship runs counter to the more traditional view that

[3] In conceptual terms, mutual dependence is analogous to variance in quantitative analysis. Since cross-classification analysis seeks to predict cell frequencies, the concept of dependence is more accurate and appropriate than variance. For a discussion of mutual dependence, see Goodman (1972a).

[4] The Index of Career Interest is a count of the number of career-oriented life goals that a respondent classified as "essential" or "very important." The five items included in the Index are shown in Table 1.

citizenship is a universal duty not related to personal gain or career advancement. The result is consistent with interest specialization and suggests that the decision to follow politics is related to other important life goals and reflects a rational or utilitarian view of political participation.

The second best predictor of the salience of politics to young adults was the family politicization experience of the respondent, which explained 18 per cent of the total mutual dependence in the logit model. The politicization variable used in this model was a typology and its three groupings represented a high level of family politicization, a high level of peer politicization in the absence of family politicization, and the absence of both family and peer politicization[5]. The analysis indicated that exposure to family political discussions was positively associated with the salience of politics, while the absense of family and peer political discourse was negatively related to the salience of politics. This result is consistent with the previous work in political socialization (Jennings and Niemi, 1974; Dawson, Prewitt, Dawson, 1978).

The third best predictor of the salience of politics was the lev-

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[5] In the 1978 NPAS, politicization was measured by the number of times a respondent reported talking about foreign policy issues, science-related issues, economic issues, or civil rights issues with family, other students out of class, or in classroom activities. For a full discussion of the construction of the politicization variables, see Miller, Suchner, Voelker (1980).

[6] The Index of Political Efficacy is a count of the disagreements with four statements that policy matters in foreign policy, science policy, economic policy, or civil rights should be left to experts and the agreements with four statements that the interested and informed citizen can have influence in policy matters in the same four substantive areas.

el of political efficacy[6]. which accounted for six per cent of the total mutual dependence in the logit model. While this relationship was the weakest of the three direct relationships, it was significant at the .05 level and indicated that a high sense of political efficacy was positively associated with the salience of politics.

The multivariate model also indicated the there were no relationships paths between gender, self-esteem, and educational aspirations and the salience of politics. It will be recalled that the bivariate relationships between these three independent variables and the salience of politics appeared to be significant. For example, men were significantly more likely to find politics salient than women. The advantage of a multivariate model is that we can hold constant a number of the relationships among the independent variables and search for residual relationships. In the case of gender, the multivariate model suggested that young men were more likely to aspire to a college or graduate education, to have a high level of career interest, and to experience peer political discussions, but that young women were more politically efficacious. The bivariate differences between male and female respondents were fully explained by these three direct relationships and there was no direct -- or residual -- relationship attributable to gender alone.

In summary, the multivariate model indicated that the best predictors of the salience of politics among young adults were a high level of career interest, a high level of family politicization, and a strong sense of political efficacy. Gender, self-esteem, and educational aspirations were all found to relate to the salience of politics indirectly through one or more of the other direct relationships.

These results are consistent with the interest specialization process and suggests that the process does begin in the young adult years.

INTEREST SPECIALIZATION AMONG ADULTS

If the roots of interest specialization can be found in the pre-adult years, it should be possible to identify the same interest specialization process in the adult population. For this purpose, a measure was constructed that employed some aspects of the previous conceptualizations of Milbrath (1965) and Verba and Nie (1972). Using data from a recent national survey of adults designed by Miller and Prewitt (1979) and sponsored by the National Science Foundation[7], the adult population was divided into three groups:

(1) those persons who reported no political activity of any kind,

(2) those who reported voting in a national and/or local election, but reported no other political activity, and

(3) those who reported one or more of the following activities: working for a political party or candidate, attending a political meeting, asking someone else to vote for a party or candidate, or wearing

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[7] The 1979 survey of the attitudes of the U. S. public toward science and technology was supported by the Science Indicators Unit of the National Science Foundation under contracts numbered SRS-78-16839 and SRS-79-25118. All of the opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation or its staff.

The survey was a national multistage cluster sample of 1635 households. Personal interviews were conducted and the interview time averaged about 60 minutes. Respondents were asked a wide range of questions about their interests in various issue areas, their level of information about those areas, and several series of items about selected science and technology issues. For a full description of the sample and the instrument, see Miller, Prewitt, and Pearson (1980).

a campaign button, displaying a political poster or contacting a public official on a policy issue.

The selection of activities followed the scale first suggested by Milbrath (1965) and these activities represent various forms of political activity beyond the ritual voter, as described by Verba and Nie (1972). The data from the 1979 survey indicated that approximately 23 per cent of the adult population were politically inactive, that 28 per cent were voters only, and that the remaining 49 per cent were politically active. This result is consistent with most of the previous studies of political participation and with the interest specialization model discussed above. For the purposes of this analysis, I will refer to those persons in the most active group as persons for whom politics are a salient activity (see Table 6).

The data from the 1979 survey indicated that males were slightly more likely to find politics salient than females, but the strongest relationship was between the level of formal education and the salience of politics. Only 36 per cent of the respondents with less than a high school diploma found politics to be a salient activity, in contrast to 75 per cent of graduate degree holders. It is likely that most of the differences found in age, occupation, and socio-economic status reflect -- in large part -- the distribution of formal education .

TABLE 6

The Salience of Politics to Adults

	Inactive	Vote only	Active	N
All Adults	23%	28%	49%	1635
Gender				
Female	25	30	45	862
Male	20	27	53	773
Age				
17-24	43	15	42	309
25-34	26	26	48	361
35-44	18	24	58	258
45-54	13	31	56	234
55-64	14	37	49	228
65 and over	14	43	44	245
Education				
LT high school	33	30	36	465
High school	25	30	45	550
Some college	19	28	54	382
Baccalaureate	4	23	74	146
Graduate degree	3	22	75	92
Occupation				
Prof. & Tech.	9	27	64	258
Managerial	8	28	64	170
Sales	16	35	49	90
Clerical	20	30	50	283
Craftsman	24	25	51	168
Operative	33	26	42	235
Laborer	35	25	40	64
Farm Worker	21	45	34	32
Service Worker	33	31	36	187
Other	39	26	36	148
Respondent SES				
Low	33	29	39	339
Middle	20	30	49	728
High	5	25	70	298

SUMMARY

Looking at both analyses, it appears that politics are salient to only half of the adult population and to slightly fewer young adults. The conventional explanation of the low level of political interest among young adults has been that this is a more personal time in the life cycle, but that with the acquisition of a job, a mortage, and a family, the level of political interest will revive. The 1979 data (as well as three decades of national election studies) indicated only a modest rise in the salience of politics among middle-aged and older respondents. Even in the most politically active age cohort, a full 42 per cent of the respondents did not appear to find politics to be personally salient. These data indicated that politics were most salient to persons with a college degree; a professional, technical, or managerial occupation; and an upper-middle or higher socio-economic status (SES). This result fits the interest specialization hypothesis and is an appropriate introduction to the second dimension of the political specialization model -- issue specialization.

ISSUE SPECIALIZATION

The range of political issues on the national agenda alone is vast and well beyond the ability of any individual to become and remain informed. The array of issues at the state, county, and municipal levels is almost equally diverse. Unlike our frontier ancestors who waited eagerly for old newspapers from the east, modern man faces a vast assortment of information far beyond his ability to consume. It is the task of the modern citizen to sort out those issues and are-

as about which he has a genuine concern and to try to remain moderately well informed on those topics.

The need for issue specialization is beyond mere convenience, and I would argue that it has reached the point of being a behavioral imperative in western industrial polyarchies. I think that there are three major factors active in this process and that the combination of these factors mandate a high degree of issue specialization for citizens in the latter part of the 20th century.

First, as was noted in the previous discussion of the basic salience of politics, time is a zero-sum situation and the pressures on time are greater in modern urbanized societies. While the average workweek has declined over the span of the 20th century, the revolutionary changes in our transportation and communication abilities have generated new demands on the time of most citizens. There is no evidence that these time pressures will diminish for most people in the foreseeable future.

Second, the complexity of political issues continues to increase, pushing up the information threshold for being informed on any given topic. The economy is an excellent example. During the early part of this century, the major economic issues involved the role of labor and the appropriateness of various fiscal and monetary stimuli to the economy. In a general intuitive sense, a substantial number of people had an idea of the basic premises of Keynesian economics, and especially those persons for whom politics were salient. As the economy has become international in scope and more complex, the level of information needed to be informed about economic issues has increased

substantially. How many people can explain the impact of the gold markets on the value of the dollar, or the meaning of "supply-side economics?"

Finally, the cost of acquiring information is increasing--both in time and dollar terms. Despite the communications revolution -- or perhaps because of it -- specific issue information is often channelled through publications and media that are not for general consumption. For example, on many scientific or technological issues, the popular press carries only the most cursory of information and has few indepth analyses. Television reports are usually limited to 30 seconds, although the growth of televison "magazine" progams promises some increase in in-depth coverage. To be informed on agricultural issues, one must read some of the trade journals in the field. To keep up with the nuclear power debate, more than an evening newspaper or weekly newsmagazine is needed. To follow tax reform, reading in specialized media is mandatory. In short, to be informed on an issue requires some specialized information for an increasing number of issues and topics, and this specialized information is rarely available from general media sources.

When these three trends are viewed in combination, it is clear that the era of the political generalist has passed, and probably has been gone for several decades. Further, an increasing level of skills will be required to locate and comprehend policy-relevant information in various substantive areas. To determine the level of issue specialization that has occurred, it is appropriate to turn to an analysis of the young adult and adult data sets discussed above.

ISSUE SPECIALIZATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

The 1978 National Public Affairs Study was designed to test the issue specialization hypothesis among young adults. Respondents were asked to read a set of 30 "headlines" that might have appeared in a newspaper or magazine and to indicate whether they would definitely read, probably read, probably not read, or definitely not read each of the headlines. Given the ordinal character of the data, a gamma matrix was constructed and a factor analysis performed. Those respondents for whom politics were not salient showed little structure to their topical interests, but those respondents who found politics to be salient displayed a clear and interpretable structure of issue selection.

Among those respondents for whom politics were salient, six factors emerged. The five foreign policy headlines loaded strongly on the first factor, suggesting a clear grouping of interest in that area. Headlines concerning affirmative action for women and welfare reform also loaded on the first factor, but with weaker loadings (see Table 7). Four technology-related items loaded on a second factor and five science related items loaded on a third factor. These results follow the previous findings of Miller, Suchner, and Voelker (1980). The two sports items combined on a fourth factor. The clear isolation of this factor from the other more political headlines supports the basic issue specialization hypothesis. Six headlines involving sex discrimination, birth control, free speech, police search procedures, jobs, and unemployment loaded on a fifth factor, which may be labelled a human rights factor. The sixth factor included six headlines con-

cerning energy, pollution, solar energy, oil reserves, and inflation, which may be labelled an energy-environment factor.

Looking at the full set of factors, it appears that those young adults who found politics to be salient did embody a higher degree of issue specialization and that the clusters of topical interests were reasonable and interpretable.

The concept of following an issue involves more than simple interest. If interest was the only criterion, many politically active and concerned individuals might be said to follow a hundred or more issues at all times, but it is clear that no individual could be adequately informed on so broad a set of issues as to be able to participate effectively in either a discussion of them or the contacting of public officials. To be classified as "following as issue" for the purpose of this analysis, an individual must be able to display (or report) both an interest in and some knowledge about that issue. Following the terminiology of Almond (1950), we will refer to those persons who are both interested in and informed about an issue as being the attentive public for that issue.

In the 1978 NPAS, each respondent's level of interest and knowledge were measured in regard to foreign policy, science policy, economic policy, and civil rights issues, and estimates of the proportion of young adults attentive to each area were constructed[8]. Approximately 18 per cent of the young adults in the NPAS study were attentive to foreign policy, science policy, and civil rights issues, but only 10 per cent were attentive to foreign policy issues (see Table

[8] For details concerning the construction of the attentiveness indices, see Miller, Suchner, Voelker (1980).

TABLE 7

The Factor Structure of Young Adult Headline Reading Preferences

Headlines	Oblique Factor Patterns					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Foreign trade policy	.84	.05	.08	.03	-.09	-.01
Conflict in southern Africa	.81	-.07	-.08	-.05	.08	.06
Italian elections	.70	-.17	.05	-.02	-.02	.02
New trade treaties	.65	-.06	-.00	-.02	.04	-.15
Middle East peace	.59	-.21	-.01	-.03	.07	-.02
Affirmative action	.54	.18	-.05	.01	.21	-.13
Need for welfare reform	.46	.17	-.06	-.04	.26	-.20
New long-range missile	.10	-.75	-.01	.00	.09	-.25
Soviets launch space station	.07	-.59	.29	-.05	.15	-.06
New weapons system	.16	-.57	.12	.16	.04	-.09
Need for manned flight	.20	-.48	.42	.13	-.08	-.01
Human cell modification research	.12	-.10	.50	-.16	.02	-.20
Basic science research	.25	-.07	.50	-.03	-.11	-.26
Cancer therapy drug	.07	.00	.46	-.03	.31	-.14
Need for research funding	.46	.02	.46	.04	-.07	-.12
Study of UFO sightings	-.16	-.28	.42	.12	.21	.03
Strength of NFL	-.06	.02	.02	.90	-.02	-.00
Baseball favorites	.03	.05	.01	.78	-.00	-.01
Rules on sex discrimination	-.04	-.01	-.04	-.08	.66	-.20
New birth control device	.02	.07	.30	-.12	.56	.08
Freedom-of-speech case	.30	-.04	-.00	-.03	.55	-.02
Police-search procedures	.21	-.16	-.01	.07	.51	.01
Impact of unemployment	.18	.26	-.04	-.00	.38	-.29
Create new jobs	.18	.07	-.13	.11	.38	-.38
Energy crisis	-.05	-.13	-.17	.05	.06	-.82
Chemical pollution	.13	.04	.32	-.11	-.09	-.59
Pollution in Great Lakes	.02	.01	.24	-.08	.01	-.58
Solar energy	.07	-.16	.30	-.05	-.06	-.55
Policy to fight inflation	.23	.04	-.07	.01	.21	-.50
New report on oil reserves	.23	-.16	.17	.06	-.08	-.46
Preview of summer fashions	-.06	.37	.14	-.06	.34	.09
Value of breakfast cereals	-.07	.29	.33	.03	.27	-.15

8). Young adults for whom politics were salient, males, and persons in college or planning to attend college were most likely to be attentive in all four issue areas.

TABLE 8

Percentage of Young Adults Attentive to Four Issues

	Percentage attentive to ...				
	Science Policy	Foreign Policy	Economic Policy	Civil Rights	N
All Respondents	17%	10%	18%	18%	4029
Salience of Politics					
Low	14	6	13	15	2449
High	21	15	25	24	1580
Gender					
Female	11	7	14	16	2064
Male	23	13	21	20	1962
Educ. Expectations					
HS/AA/Less	5	2	6	5	1235
College/Grad	24	14	24	26	2436
Parental SES					
Low	12	7	16	14	2775
High	26	15	21	27	1254

The distribution of attentiveness across the four issue domains was basically pluralistic in character. Only two per cent of the NPAS young adults were attentive to all four issue areas and an additional six per cent were attentive to three of the four issues (see Table 9). Approximately 15 per cent were attentive to a single issue.

TABLE 9

The Distribution of Issue Attentiveness among Young Adults

Attentive to	Per Cent
No issues	67%
1 issue	15
2 issues	10
3 issues	6
4 issues	2
N =	4029

In summary, the young adult data showed a relatively high level of issue specialization and a pluralistic distribution. The strong associations between issue attentiveness and educational status and plans and the salience of politics are all supportive of the issue specialization hypothesis.

ISSUE SPECIALIZATION AMONG ADULTS

Parallel to the process described above for young adults, the 1979 adult survey included a battery of 32 "headlines." Respondents were asked to read each headline and to indicate whether they would definitely, probably, probably not, or definitely not read a story with that headline.

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[9] The factor analysis utilized the data from those respondents with

As with the young adult headlines, a factor analysis[9] was performed and six clear factors emerged. The first factor included six headlines concerning nuclear power and environmental issues. The second factor included eight items that reflected a cross-section of organized science. The third factor consisted of two items, both related to the food additives issue. The fourth factor included eight national policy items, ranging from inflation and unemployment to the role of the United Nations in southern Africa. The fifth factor was a male recreation factor, including items on football, baseball, home computers, and auto emission systems. The sixth factor included three local politics headlines.

The factor analysis demonstrated that the adults in the 1979 study employed a high degree of differentiation in their reading preferences. This is the pattern predicted by the issue specialization model.

The 1979 Survey included a second approach to the measurement of issue specialization. Each respondent was given a card listing nine issue areas and asked to report for each area if he was very interested, somewhat interested, or not at all interested. The responses display a high level of selectivity in issue interest, following the model of specialization under study (see Table 11). Approximately two-thirds of the respondents reported a high level of interest in three or fewer issues and less than one per cent professed a high lev-

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some educational experiences beyond a high school diploma. It was found that those respondents with a high school diploma or less lacked a clear structure in their reading preferences. Miller, Suchner, Voelker (1980) found the same result for high school students not planning to attend college.

TABLE 10

Factor Structure for Headline Interest for Adults

Headlines	Oblique Factor Patterns						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nuclear Plant in County	.80	.02	.19	-.10	.06	.10	.17
Engineer Finds Nuclear Leak	.65	.04	.10	.14	-.01	-.05	.10
Engineers Discuss Nuclear Plant	.64	.10	.04	.12	.06	-.15	-.02
Scientists Studying Nuclear Wastes	.58	.03	.12	.25	-.05	-.07	.09
Senate Witnesses on Solar Energy	.37	.19	.08	.22	.03	-.26	-.03
Economist Discusses Unemployment	-.11	.68	.16	-.04	.04	-.25	-.03
President Asks for More Jobs	-.08	.62	.22	-.14	.07	-.16	.10
New Talks on Middle East Peace	.22	.61	.04	.02	.03	.02	.00
UN Secretary Reviews S. Africa	.13	.58	-.05	.14	.07	.19	.16
Common Markets Sets Trade Policy	.17	.57	-.08	.12	.05	.12	.09
New Policy Needed on Inflation	-.10	.32	.13	.02	.07	-.26	.30
Study Links Food Dye to Cancer	.12	.04	.93	-.02	.01	.02	-.09
FDA Study of Food Additive Safety	.03	.03	.69	.14	.05	-.04	.06
Professor Reports on Cancer Study	.17	.10	.54	.10	-.04	-.03	.09
Local Protest of DNA Experiment	.00	-.08	.05	.82	-.06	.05	.07
Scientists Explains Cell Research	-.03	-.11	.13	.80	-.01	.01	-.06
Scientist Cites DNA Danger	.19	.02	.12	.66	-.09	-.01	-.03
Scientists Assert Need for Funds	-.01	.26	-.03	.55	.04	-.04	.11
Scientist Supports Manned Flight	.22	.18	-.16	.52	.19	-.10	-.14
President Reports on Science	.02	.19	.09	.50	.00	-.13	.01
Satellite to Improve Telephone	.14	.00	.00	.39	.06	-.11	.21
Firm to Market Home Computer	.04	.19	-.14	.34	.26	.06	.03
Baseball Writers Set Favorites	-.02	-.08	.07	-.09	.92	.05	-.08
Cosell Reviews NFL Season	-.02	.00	-.05	-.02	.65	-.05	.05
Oil Executive Assesses Energy	.00	.06	.08	.09	.11	-.62	.25
Geologists Report on Oil Reserves	.25	.16	-.03	.17	.09	-.40	.15
County Discusses Property Tax Hike	.16	-.07	.02	-.04	-.04	-.21	.66
School Board Candidates Speak	.10	.10	.07	-.03	.04	.04	.56
Mayoral Candidates Set Programs	-.03	.26	-.04	.07	.11	.09	.48
Pesticides Pollute Lake Fish	.27	.05	.29	.16	.02	-.06	.08
Paris and London Fashion Report	-.22	.03	.25	.17	.04	.26	.28
Auto Makers to Use Emission System	.22	.03	.08	.17	.28	-.27	.04

el of interest in all nine areas. This is exactly the distribution predicted by the issue specialization hypothesis.

TABLE 11

The Distribution of Issue Interest and Attentiveness among Adults

Number of Issues	Very Interested	Attentive
0	16%	52%
1	15	14
2	16	8
3	17	10
4	15	7
5	11	4
6	5	2
7+	5	1
Total	100	100
N =	1635	1635

As indicated above, however, the concept of following as issue requires more than interest alone. Since the 1979 survey asked each respondent to classify himself on both the level of interest in and the level of knowledge about each of a set of issues, it was possible to use these reports to estimate the proportion of adults attentive to each of the eight major issue clusters. The data indicated that the distribution of knowledge was much more limited than the distribution of interest, thus the final distribution of attentiveness was much more skewed toward the low end of the distribution. A full half of the respondents indicated that they were not attentive to any of the eight major issue domains[10] included in the 1979 study (see Table 11).

Only 14 per cent of the respondents qualified as "single issue" persons while an additional 18 per cent reported that they attempted to keep up with two or three issues. Only seven per cent of the adults in the study reported that they kept up with five or more issues.

This distribution is similar to the young adult distribution discussed in the previous section, and is supportive of the issue specialization model. The data showed that the number of single issue voters is substantially smaller than is often assumed and that the typical number of issues followed is about three. This distribution is also pluralistic in nature, suggesting that adults do allocate their time and resources in regard to political issues.

POLITICAL SPECIALIZATION

The processes of interest specialization and issue specialization work simultaneously and it is their joint effect that I refer to as political specialization. The most direct approach to understanding the political specialization process is to examine the relationship betwen interest and issue specialization in empirical terms. The end result is best observed in terms of adult political behavior, so we will turn to the adult data first, then return to the young adult data to examine the formation of the adult patterns.

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10 The eight issue areas were agricultural policy, economic policy, energy policy, foreign policy, science and technology policy, minority rights, women's rights, and local school issues.

POLITICAL SPECIALIZATION AMONG ADULTS

Using the 1979 study data base, it is possible to define three levels of interest specialization and three levels of issue specialization, thus producing a nine cell typology of political behavior (see Table 12). The three levels of interest specialization defined earlier -- inactivity, voting only, and political activity beyond voting -- will be utilized again. Issue specialization will be grouped into those persons attentive to no issue at all, those persons attentive to one or two issues, and those persons attentive to three or more issues.

To understand the political specialization process, it is useful to examine each of the nine cells. The first and simpliest cell is comprised of those persons who had no interest in political affairs and who followed no issues. I have labelled this group the Apoliticals. According to the 1979 study, approximately 16 per cent of the adult population of the United States were Apoliticals.

Staying in the no issue column, the second cell is comprised of those persons who reported that they voted regularly but who professed to follow none of the eight issues included in the 1979 study. I have labelled this group the Ritual Voters. The data from the 1979 survey indicated that approximately one in five adults were Ritual Voters.

The third cell in the no issue column is comprised on those persons who reported a relatively high level of political activity -- especially electoral -- but who did not report attentiveness to any of the issues in the study. I have labelled this group Party Loyalists and the 1979 data indicated that approximately one in five adults belonged in this classification.

TABLE 12

Political Specialization Among Adults

Salience of Politics	Number of Issues Followed: 0	1-2	3-4
not salient	apoliticals 16%	narrow issue specialists 5%	broad issue specialists 2%
vote only	ritual voters 19	narrow issue voters 7	broad issue voters 2
salient	party loyalists 21	narrow issue activists 19	classic democratic citizens 9

N=1635

Citizens who follow one or two political issues may be thought of as having a narrowly focused political perspective. While 31 per cent of the adult population fell into this classification in the 1979 study, it is most useful to examine this group within each of the three levels of interest specialization.

One group has no political interest and may be thought of as Apolitical Issue Specialists. This type of person might display a high level of interest in a given issue and be adequately informed about it, but feel that it is inappropriate or futile to seek a political solution to the issue. While only five per cent of the adults in the 1979 survey were Apolitical Issue Specialists, it is important to try to better understand the attitudes or barriers that keep this group out of active participation in the political system.

A second group of narrow-issue followers reported that they voted regularly, but limited their political activities to voting. I have labelled this group Narrowly Focused Voters and the 1979 data indicated that about seven per cent of the adult population fell into this classification.

A third group of narrowly focused issue followers report a level of political activity beyond voting and I have labelled this group Narrowly Focused Activitists. The 1979 data indicated that about 19 per cent of the adult population are Narrowly Focused Activitists. When this group is combined with the Narrowly Focused Voters, they represent a quarter of the adult population of the United States. Since these voters and activitists are concerned about only one or two issues, it is reasonable to expect that they are among the easiest

groups to move from one party or candidate to another on the basis of specific issue positions in electoral contests.

Those citizens who follow three or more political issues may be thought of as having a somewhat broader view of the political agenda and of the political system more generally. It is not unreasonable to assume that they would better understand the principle of compromise since they may find some conflicts between the end objectives within the issues that they follow.

A small portion of this group apparently have choosen to abstain from political activity. I have labelled this group the Broadly Focused Apoliticals, and the 1979 survey indicated that about two per cent of the adult population belonged to this category. One is tempted to speculate that these people are alienated from the political system or to find other reasons for this choice, but the group is small in number and appears to have little current impact on the political system.

Another small segment of this broadly focused group reported that they limited their political participation to voting and I have labelled this group the Broadly Focused Voters. They also represent only about two per cent of the adult population.

The majority of those persons with broader issue ranges were political activitists. I have labelled this group the Classic Democratic Citizens, since they represent the traditional model of persons with concern about several issues and a willingness to engage in the political system beyond the act of voting. The 1979 study indicated that about nine per cent of the adult population are Classic Democrat-

ic Citizens. If this is the ideal toward which we strive, then it would appear that the last several decades of civics education have failed.

As a general model, this conceptualization offers an explanation of several important processes in the American polyarchy. First, it recognizes that specialization decisions are matters of choice -- not symbols of ignorance. If one starts with the premise that all citizens should follow most political issues, then it is hard to draw any but the most dire of conclusions about the recent, current, or prospective health of the political system in the United States. The specialization model allows for a greater degree of pluralism, and is more reflective of the diversity of the American people. Given the acceptable range of life goals in our socity, there is no imperative that all citizens be attentive to politics per se or to any given issue. It is obviously essential that citizens retain the right to intervene when they are so moved, and the recent history of the American political system suggests that this option is fully operative.

Second, the model provides some insight into the results of modern opinion polls which have tended to ask national probability samples of adults a wide range of issue attitudes. From Converse (1964) to Dawson (1973), a number of distinguished political scientists have sought to find an ideological framework in the thinking of the American public, but without success. Indeed, given the logic of the specialization model, it would be most surprising to find very many citizens who are able to state (or even recognize) a consistently liberal or conservative positions in a wide range of issue areas. In his fa-

mous mass public analysis, Converse (1964) measured individual policy views on the following issues for his assessment of attitude constraint: employment programs, aid to education, federal housing policy, the Fair Employment Practices Commission, economic aid to foreign countries, military aid to foreign countries, and isolationism. Viewed in the context of the specialization model, Converse's finding that slightly over half of the respondents in his study were able to define the liberal-conservative difference in terms of group impact or at a more sophisticated level is not surprising, or even disappointing. Since only about half of the adult population defines politics as an area of interest and concern, it would have been surprising to have found a substantially higher level of attitude constraint.

A full discussion of the utility of the political specialization model for understanding recent political behavior is beyond the scope of this paper. I hope to complete a monograph concerning the broader implications of political specialization later this year, but I think that this brief discussion points to as least some of its potential utility. At this point, it may be useful to turn to an examination of the roots of political specialization, as reflected in the young adult data from the 1978 NPAS.

POLITICAL SPECIALIZATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Having examined the impact of political specialization on adult political behavior, it is appropriate to inquire about the processes through which these adult behaviors were formed. The data from the interest and issue specialization processes discussed above provide a

framework for examining the impact of the specialization process in the young adult cohort. It will be recalled that the salience of politics was measured by a dichotomous variable and that issue attentiveness was measured for four issue areas. When the issue attentiveness was grouped in the same categories as the adult data, a set of six cells or types emerged.

The three types of political behavior for young adults for who politics are not salient closely parallel the adult categories for the same set of conditions (see Table 13). The data from the 1978 NPAS indicated that about 60 per cent of those high school students not planning to attend college are Apoliticals, displaying neither an interest in politicas generally nor in any specific issue. Since the non-college-bound cohort represents approximately half of the young adult group, this would translate into 30 per cent of the next political generation. Among high school students planning to go to college, the proportion who were Apoliticals dropped to 40 per cent, and the college experience appeared to reduce this percentage even further. It seems clear that a substantial portion of this young adult population are not finding politics to be a personally salient activity and are not becoming interested in or informed about specific political issues. These results would indicate that the proportion of Apoliticals in the population is likely to increase in the next generation.

The categories applicable for those young adults for whom politics are salient are somewhat different since we have little or no record of voting opportunities on which to rank activity level. Those young adults who reported politics to be salient but were not atten-

TABLE 13

Political Specialization Among Young Adults

Educational Status	Salience of Politics	Number of Issues Followed: 0	1-2	3-4	N
Typology	Low	apoliticals	narrow issue specialists	broad issue specialists	
	High	ritual citizenship	narrow issue activists	broad issue activists	
High School Non-College Bound	Low	61%	5%	1%	1218
	High	28	5	0	
High School College Bound	Low	40	12	1	1098
	High	27	16	5	
College	Low	28	23	8	1422
	High	16	15	10	

tive to any of the four issues were labeled Ritual Citizens. If they were to remain interested but non-attentive, they would become either ritual voters or party loyalists, to use the labels from the adult model. Similarily, those young adults who reported politics to be salient and who were attentive to some political issues were labels as either Narrow Issue Activitists or Broad Issue Activitists. About 28 per cent of the non-college-bound group and 27 per cent of the college-bound high school students were classified as Ritual Citizens, according to the data from the 1978 NPAS. Only five per cent of the high school students not planning college found politics to be salient and were attentive to at least one of the four issue areas, in contrast to 21 per cent of the college-bound students. A quarter of college students were in one of the two activitist categories. If this trend were to persist, the educational bias of the political specialization process would become more pronounced and would point toward a class politics based on education and professional status.

SUMMARY

Looking at the political specialization process in both young adults and adults, it would appear that the data from the two national surveys point toward an increasing level of selectivity in the allocation of time and other scarce resources and to some decline in the proportion of citizens willing to make this investment in the political system. There is a clear pattern of higher rates of participation among the best educated segments of the population and of significnatly lower levels among persons not attending college.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

In recent decades, political education has moved from an institutional focus to a more behavioral focus, and it seems to me that the political specialization model discussed above offers important opportunities for a re-conceptualization of certain of the objectives and approaches to political education.

First, citizenship is usually presented as a duty and responsibility. All persons ought to participate in a democratic or polyarchical political system and students are presented with citizenship most often as an unavoidable responsibility. It seems to me that it might be more effective -- and more accurate -- to present citizenship as an opportunity involving both costs and rewards. There are many attractive alternatives in the allocation of time and other scarce resources, and political participation may be seen as an opportunity to have some influence on matters of importance to the individual.

The importance of issue specialization is that it allows a student to see the possibility of participating on those issues of personal concern. Not everyone has to follow tax reform, agricultural parity debates, or the international trade arguments. Too often, it seems to me, our civics and social science instruction has attempted to focus on the issues perceived to be important by teachers or curriculum developers and have left too little opportunity for students to see politics as being relevant to whatever is important in their own lives. I recognize that there has been substantial change in political education in recent years and much of the newer material does run in this direction, but it seems to have done so almost acciden-

tially and without a theoretical base for understanding why it ought to be moving in that direction.

Second, it seems to me that the specialization model should allow us to discuss and teach citizenship in less moral terms. There are many aspects to modern life and society and it is not the case that all citizens in a polarchy must attend to political events at some level. Much of the citizenship material of previous decades and some of today's material point a finger of guilt at the student who does not see politics as a major part of his or her life. We continue to produce ritual voters who are more often seeking to relieve their consciences than influence the political system. It would be better for both the individuals and the system to teach that not everyone need attend to politics, but that those who do should make the effort necessary to be informed about the issues of concern to them. All citizens however, should insist on the right to re-enter the political system should an issue become sufficiently salient for them.

Third, the specialization model suggests some instructional strategies that might be useful in teaching citizenship. Traditionally, and for professional reasons, civics and social studies teachers at the pre-collegiate level are usually specialists, reflecting their disciplinary colleagues in colleges and universities. Yet, at the collegiate level, we have gradually learned that courses like the politics of local school systems or the politics of science are attractive to students and -- even if for the wrong reasons -- have begun to offer them. The recent and continuing growth of science and society programs and science and public policy programs at the collegiate level illustrates this trend. As pre-collegiate school systems face de-

climing enrollments and shrinking faculty resources, it may be both necessary and effective to introduce citizenship and social science materials into other aspects of the high school or middle school curriculum.

Finally, if the political specialization model is correct, then the first task in political education is to attract students to politics in the more general sense. The premature focusing of instruction on the mechanics of politics or the finer points of procedure (how does a bill get through Congress) is likely to be unproductive if the student does not see politics as a salient activity.

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